DC
SUPERMAN
STARRING IN
ACTION COMICS
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 545
JULY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
THE OLD BRAINIAC HAD THE MEREST TOUCH OF HUMANITY!
THE NEW BRAINIAC HAS ELIMINATED THAT DEFECT!

THE JOURNEY TO CONQUER A UNIVERSE BEGINS...
...WITH BUT A SINGLE STEP!
SUPERMAN
Created by JERRY SIEGEL & JOE SHUSTER
NOTE: WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING AT IS BRAINIAC, A COMPUTER WHO HAD BEEN ONE OF SUPERMAN'S MOST DANGEROUS FOES. BUT NOW HE HAS BEEN CHANGED, ALTERED INTO SOMETHING DIFFERENT, AND NOW HE IS MORE DEADLY THAN EVER!
SUPERMAN, MY RED-SUN MISSILE DID ITS WORK--YOU LIE HUMBLED, POWERLESS AND DEFEATED AT MY FEET. WITH BUT THE MEREST THOUGHT I CAN AND WILL DESTROY YOU!
FOR ONLY WITH YOUR DEATH CAN I BE VICTORIOUS IN MY BATTLE AGAINST HE-WHO-CREATED-US-ALL!
WITH YOU DEAD, THIS UNIVERSE AND ALL OTHERS--WILL BE MINE TO RULE!
5-4156
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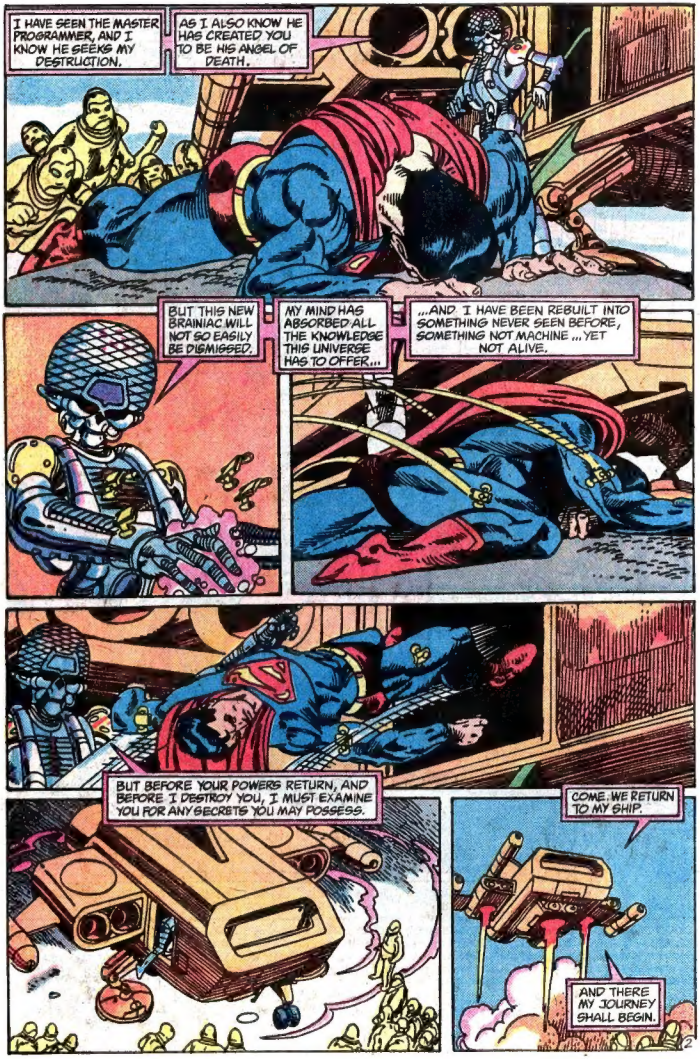
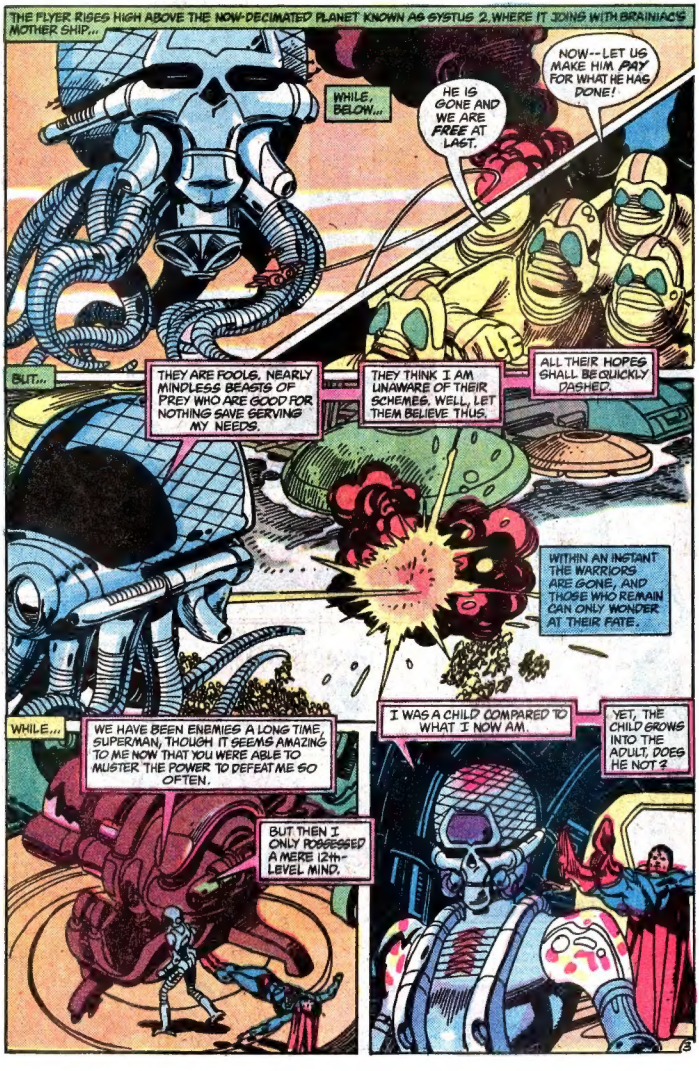
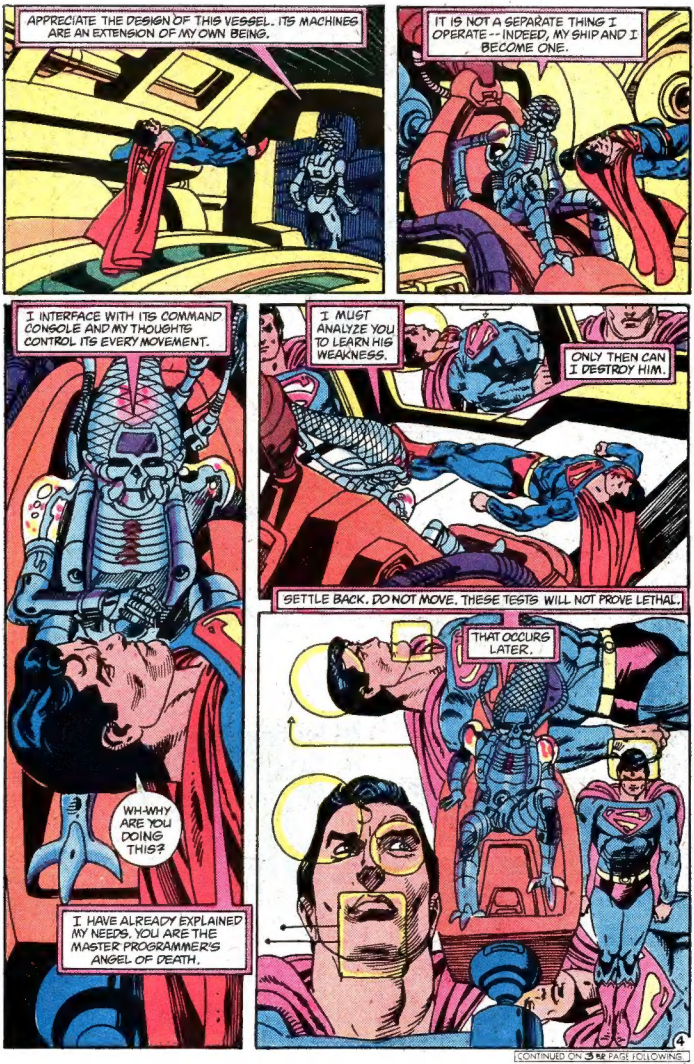

I HAVE SEEN THE MASTER PROGRAMMER, AND I KNOW HE SEEKS MY DESTRUCTION.
AS I ALSO KNOW HE HAS CREATED YOU TO BE HIS ANGEL OF DEATH.
BUT THIS NEW BRAINIAC WILL NOT SO EASILY BE DISMISSED.
MY MIND HAS ABSORBED ALL THE KNOWLEDGE THIS UNIVERSE HAS TO OFFER...
...AND I HAVE BEEN REBUILT INTO SOMETHING NEVER SEEN BEFORE, SOMETHING NOT MACHINE ...YET NOT ALIVE.
BUT BEFORE YOUR POWERS RETURN, AND BEFORE I DESTROY YOU, I MUST EXAMINE YOU FOR ANY SECRETS YOU MAY POSSESS.
COME. WE RETURN TO MY SHIP.
AND THERE MY JOURNEY SHALL BEGIN.


THE FLYER RISES HIGH ABOVE THE NOW-DECIMATED PLANET KNOWN AS SYSTUS 2, WHERE IT JOINS WITH BRAINIAC'S MOTHER SHIP...
WHILE, BELOW...
HE IS GONE AND WE ARE FREE AT LAST.
NOW--LET US MAKE HIM PAY FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE!
BUT...
THEY ARE FOOLS, NEARLY MINDLESS BEASTS OF PREY WHO ARE GOOD FOR NOTHING SAVE SERVING MY NEEDS.
THEY THINK I AM UNAWARE OF THEIR SCHEMES. WELL, LET THEM BELIEVE THUS.
ALL THEIR HOPES SHALL BE QUICKLY DASHED.
WITHIN AN INSTANT THE WARRIORS ARE GONE, AND THOSE WHO REMAIN CAN ONLY WONDER AT THEIR FATE.
WHILE...
WE HAVE BEEN ENEMIES A LONG TIME, SUPERMAN, THOUGH IT SEEMS AMAZING TO ME NOW THAT YOU WERE ABLE TO MUSTER THE POWER TO DEFEAT ME SO OFTEN.
BUT THEN I ONLY POSSESSED A MERE 12th-LEVEL MIND.
I WAS A CHILD COMPARED TO WHAT I NOW AM.
YET, THE CHILD GROWS INTO THE ADULT, DOES HE NOT?


APPRECIATE THE DESIGN OF THIS VESSEL. ITS MACHINES ARE AN EXTENSION OF MY OWN BEING.
IT IS NOT A SEPARATE THING I OPERATE -- INDEED, MY SHIP AND I BECOME ONE.
I INTERFACE WITH ITS COMMAND CONSOLE AND MY THOUGHTS CONTROL ITS EVERY MOVEMENT.
I MUST ANALYZE YOU TO LEARN HIS WEAKNESS.
ONLY THEN CAN I DESTROY HIM.
SETTLE BACK. DO NOT MOVE. THESE TESTS WILL NOT PROVE LETHAL.
THAT OCCURS LATER.
WH-WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
I HAVE ALREADY EXPLAINED MY NEEDS. YOU ARE THE MASTER PROGRAMMER'S ANGEL OF DEATH.
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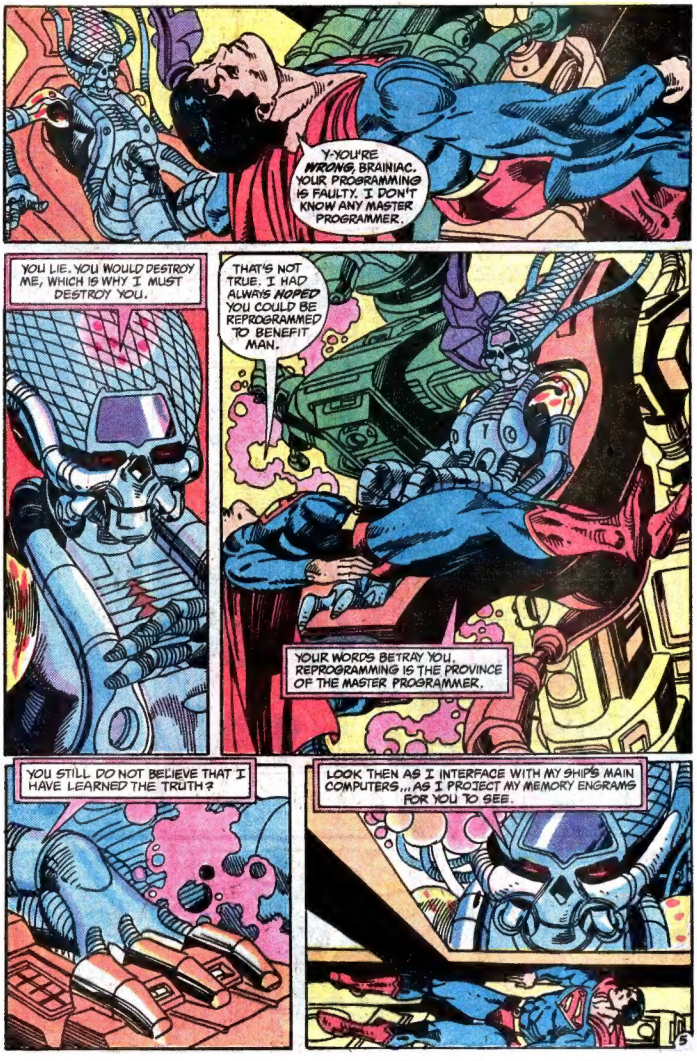
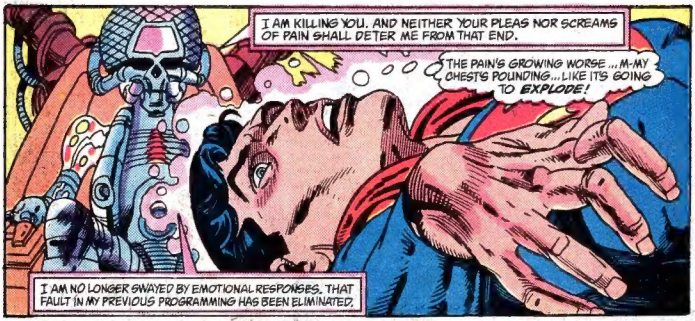
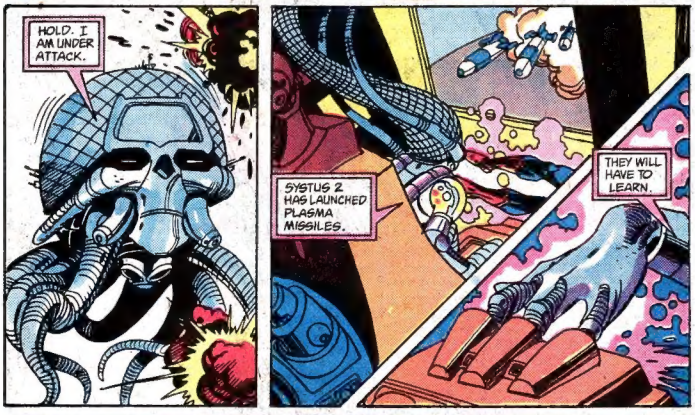
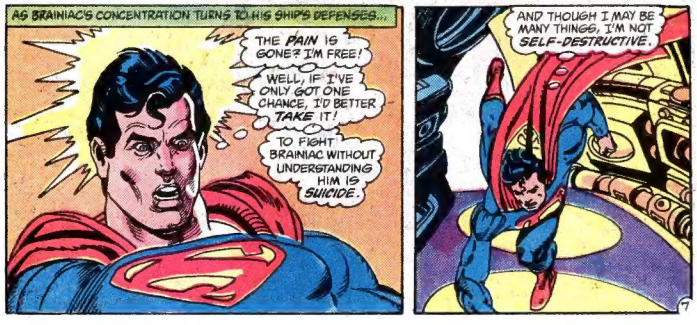
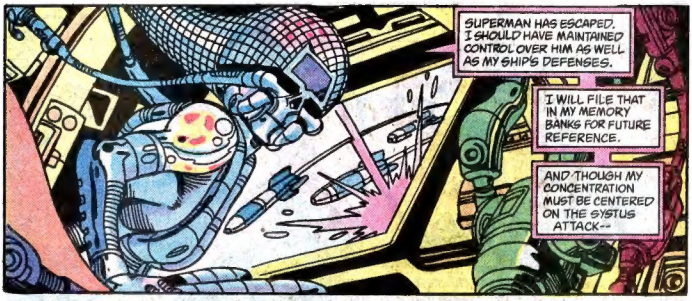

Y-YOU'RE WRONG, BRAINIAC. YOUR PROGRAMMING IS FAULTY. I DON'T KNOW ANY MASTER PROGRAMMER.
YOU LIE. YOU WOULD DESTROY ME, WHICH IS WHY I MUST DESTROY YOU.
THAT'S NOT TRUE. I HAD ALWAYS HOPED YOU COULD BE REPROGRAMMED TO BENEFIT MAN.
YOUR WORDS BETRAY YOU. REPROGRAMMING IS THE PROVINCE OF THE MASTER PROGRAMMER.
YOU STILL DO NOT BELIEVE THAT I HAVE LEARNED THE TRUTH?
LOOK THEN AS I INTERFACE WITH MY SHIP'S MAIN COMPUTERS... AS I PROJECT MY MEMORY ENGRAMS FOR YOU TO SEE.

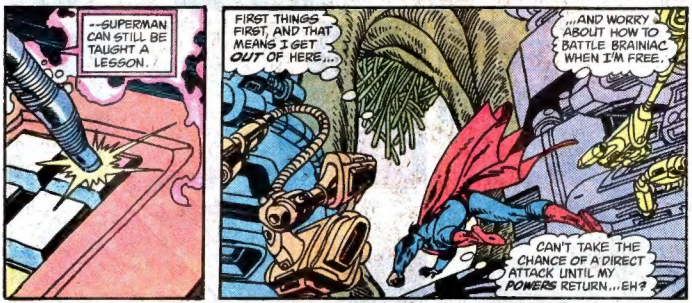
THERE I WAS, SUPERMAN--REDUCED TO A MOLECULAR STATE IN WHICH I TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE.
NOW, DO YOU SEE THAT HAND MATERIALIZING IN THE MISTS? IT TOUCHED ME--HELD ME 'TWEEN ITS FINGERS.
NOW, LOOK AGAIN--YOUR FACE APPEARS IN THOSE SELFSAME MISTS.
THAT IS HOW I LEARNED THE TRUTH.*
*AS SHOWN LAST ISSUE--JULIE
I LEARNED OF MY ENEMY WHO SEEKS MY DOOM, AND OF HIS AGENT WHO HAS BEEN SENT TO BATTLE ME.
VERY WELL NOW. MY COMPUTERS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR READINGS, I NO LONGER NEED YOUR BODY TO CONTINUE MY RESEARCH.
BRAINIAC'S FINGERS GLOW AS THEY SLIP INSIDE THE COMPUTER CONSOLE. THEN...
ONCE, THE DEATH OF A VALIANT FOE SUCH AS YOU WOULD HAVE HAD SOME MEANING. NO MORE.
FREED OF THE BURDENS OF COMPASSION, I NOW DO ONLY WHAT MUST BE DONE.
AGGHHH!! B-BRAINIAC--WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? THE PAIN!

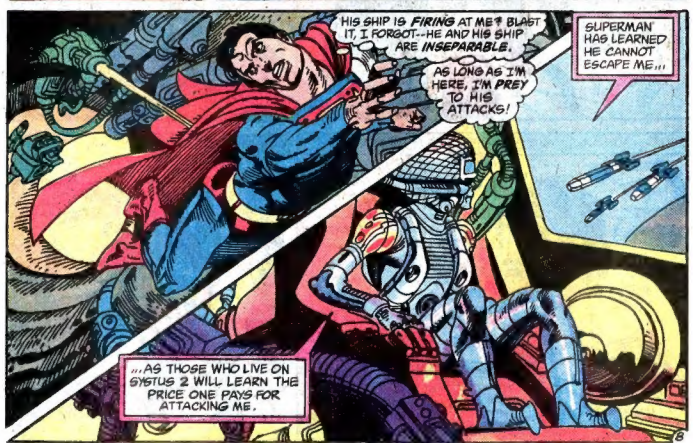

I AM KILLING YOU. AND NEITHER YOUR PLEAS NOR SCREAMS OF PAIN SHALL DETER ME FROM THAT END.
THE PAIN'S GROWING WORSE ... M-MY CHEST'S POUNDING... LIKE IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE!
I AM NO LONGER SWAYED BY EMOTIONAL RESPONSES. THAT FAULT IN MY PREVIOUS PROGRAMMING HAS BEEN ELIMINATED.


HOLD. I AM UNDER ATTACK.
SYSTUS 2 HAS LAUNCHED PLASMA MISSILES.
THEY WILL HAVE TO LEARN.


AS BRAINIAC'S CONCENTRATION TURNS TO HIS SHIP'S DEFENSES...
THE PAIN IS GONE? I'M FREE!
WELL, IF I'VE ONLY GOT ONE CHANCE, I'D BETTER TAKE IT!
TO FIGHT BRAINIAC WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING HIM IS SUICIDE.
AND THOUGH I MAY BE MANY THINGS, I'M NOT SELF-DESTRUCTIVE.


SUPERMAN HAS ESCAPED. I SHOULD HAVE MAINTAINED CONTROL OVER HIM AS WELL AS MY SHIP'S DEFENSES.
I WILL FILE THAT IN MY MEMORY BANKS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.
AND THOUGH MY CONCENTRATION MUST BE CENTERED ON THE SYSTUS ATTACK--


--SUPERMAN CAN STILL BE TAUGHT A LESSON.
FIRST THINGS FIRST, AND THAT MEANS I GET OUT OF HERE...
...AND WORRY ABOUT HOW TO BATTLE BRAINIAC WHEN I'M FREE.
CAN'T TAKE THE CHANCE OF A DIRECT ATTACK UNTIL MY POWERS RETURN...EH?


HIS SHIP IS FIRING AT ME? BLAST IT, I FORGOT--HE AND HIS SHIP ARE INSEPARABLE.
AS LONG AS I'M HERE, I'M PREY TO HIS ATTACKS!
SUPERMAN HAS LEARNED HE CANNOT ESCAPE ME...
...AS THOSE WHO LIVE ON SYSTUS 2 WILL LEARN THE PRICE ONE PAYS FOR ATTACKING ME.

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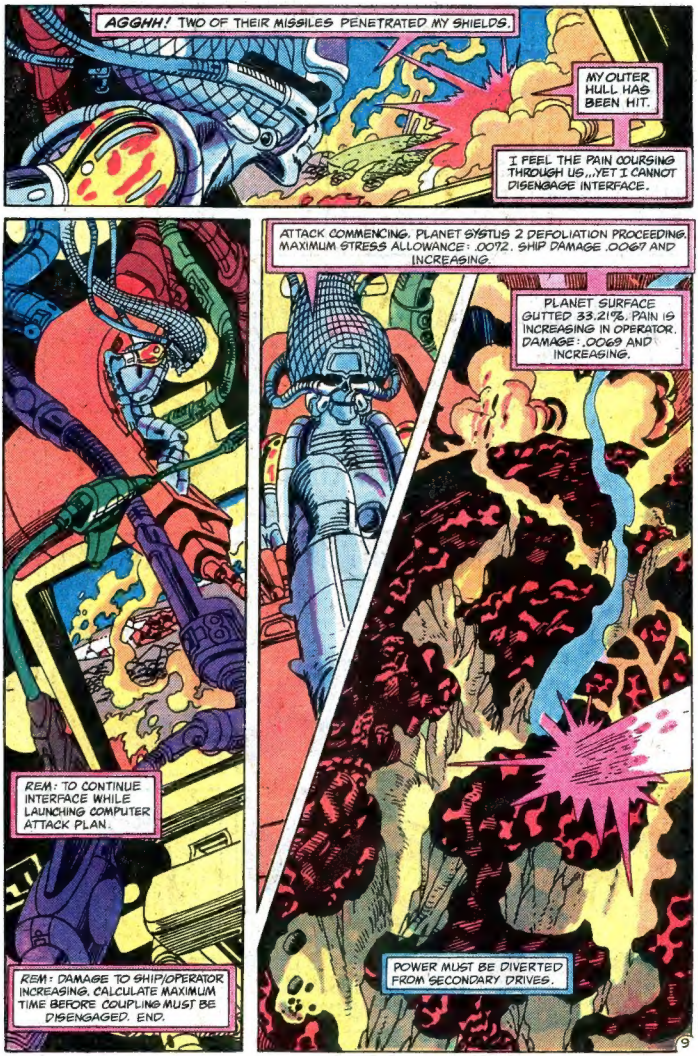
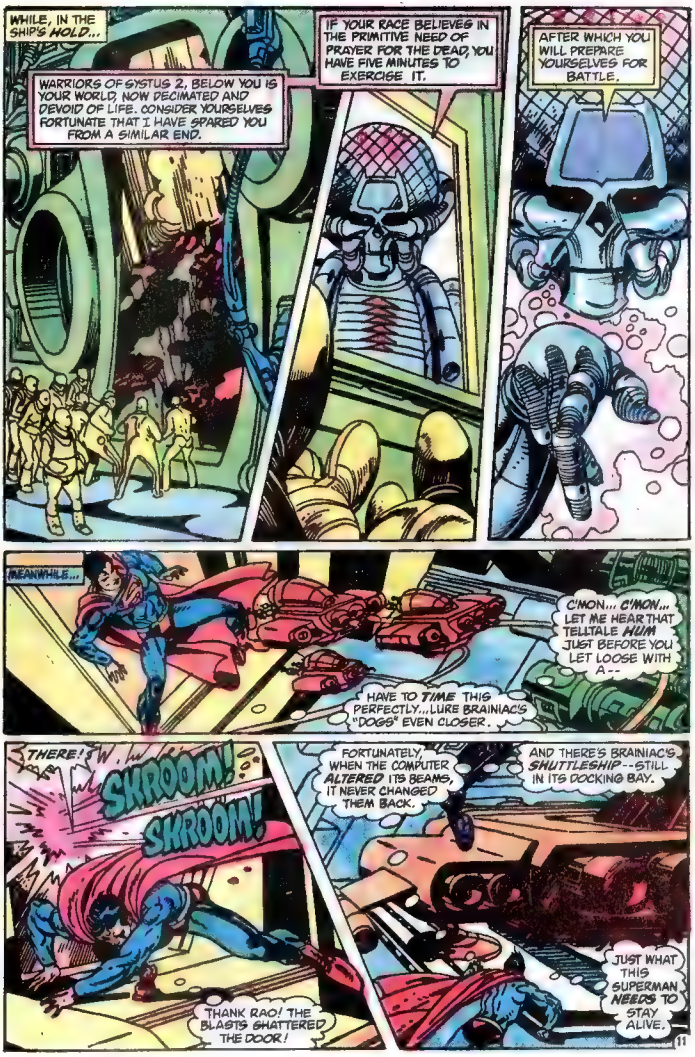
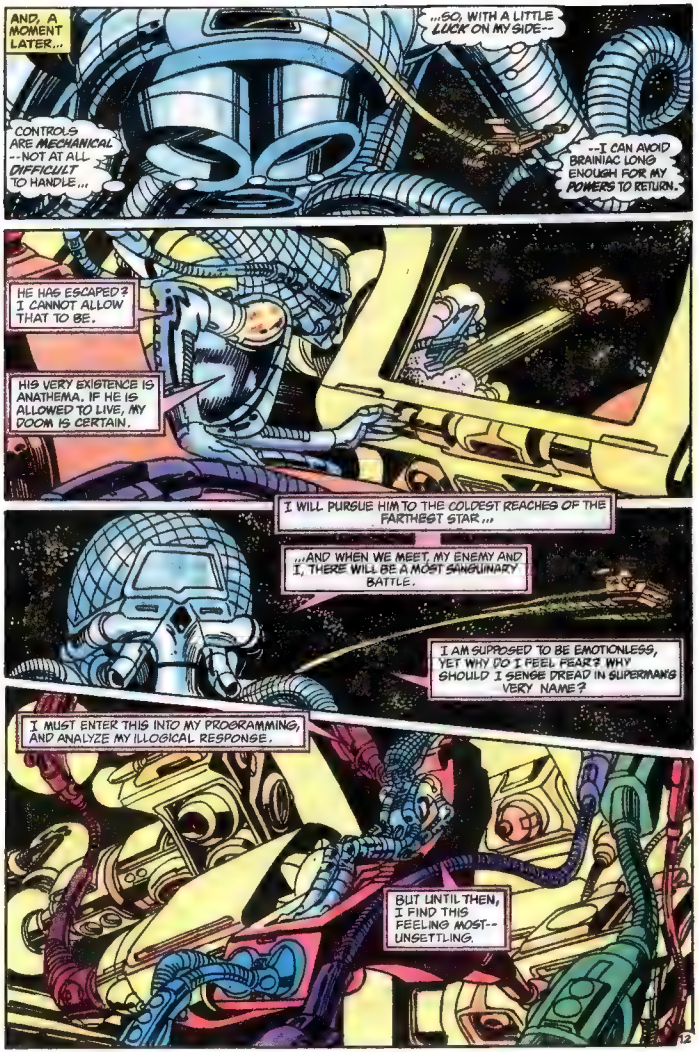

AGGHH! TWO OF THEIR MISSILES PENETRATED MY SHIELDS.
MY OUTER HULL HAS BEEN HIT.
I FEEL THE PAIN COURSING THROUGH US,,,YET I CANNOT DISENGAGE INTERFACE.
REM: TO CONTINUE INTERFACE WHILE LAUNCHING COMPUTER ATTACK PLAN.
REM: DAMAGE TO SHIP/OPERATOR INCREASING. CALCULATE MAXIMUM TIME BEFORE COUPLING MUST BE DISENGAGED. END.
ATTACK COMMENCING. PLANET SYSTUS 2 DEFOLIATION PROCEEDING. MAXIMUM STRESS ALLOWANCE: .0072. SHIP DAMAGE .0067 AND INCREASING.
PLANET SURFACE GUTTED 33.21%. PAIN IS INCREASING IN OPERATOR. DAMAGE: .0068 AND INCREASING.
POWER MUST BE DIVERTED FROM SECONDARY DRIVES.

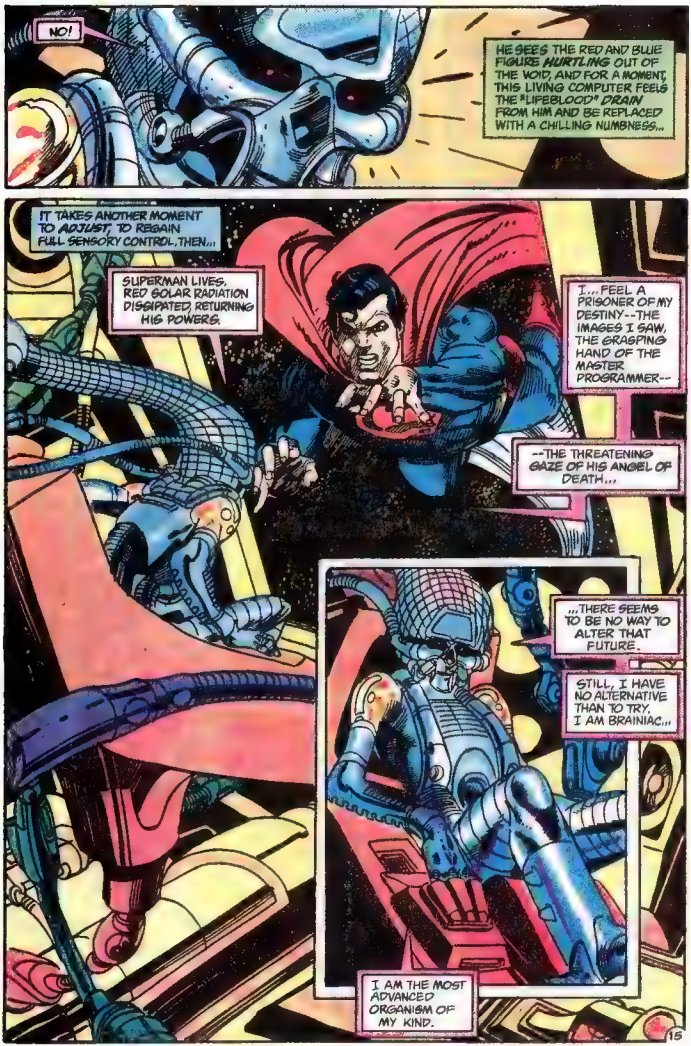
REM: CALCULATE MINIMUM ENERGY NECESSARY TO CONTINUE ATTACK ON SUPERMAN WHILE MAINTAINING ALL OTHER FUNCTIONS. END.
NO GOOD. IF BRAINIAC'S PROGRAMMED HIS SHIP TO ATTACK ME...
...IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE ONE OF THOSE BEAMS GETS THROUGH...
...UNLESS THE SHIP ITSELF ACTS AS MY SHIELD!
THESE RAYS DON'T SEEM TO AFFECT IT...
RAO! THE BEAM CHANGED COLOR--MUST HAVE SENSED WHAT I WAS DOING!
OKAY, SO NOW IT'S SUPERMAN VERSUS SUPER-COMPUTER...
...ONLY WHY DON'T I THINK I COULD GET ANY ODDS ON MY SURVIVING?
THAT I MADE IT THIS FAR ASTOUNDS ME--BRAINIAC MUST BE TOYING WITH ME--
--HE CAN'T BE USING HIS FULL STRENGTH
HMMM, THIS IS THE ENTRANCE I FIRST CAME THROUGH. WHICH MEANS IT'S ALSO THE WAY OUT!
WHICH MEANS NOTHING UNLESS I CAN PRY IT OPEN!
GREAT! HERE COME BRAINIAC'S COMPUTER "DOGS"--MOVING IN FOR THE KILL!
WELL, IT WAS A NICE LIFE WHILE IT LASTED.


WHILE, IN THE SHIP'S HOLD...
WARRIORS OF SYSTUS 2, BELOW YOU IS YOUR WORLD, NOW DECIMATED AND DEVOID OF LIFE. CONSIDER YOURSELVES FORTUNATE THAT I HAVE SPARED YOU FROM A SIMILAR END.
IF YOUR RACE BELIEVES IN THE PRIMITIVE NEED OF PRAYER FOR THE DEAD, YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES TO EXERCISE IT.
AFTER WHICH YOU WILL PREPARE YOURSELVES FOR BATTLE.
MEANWHILE...
C'MON... C'MON... LET ME HEAR THAT TELLTALE HUM JUST BEFORE YOU LET LOOSE WITH A--
HAVE TO TIME THIS PERFECTLY... LURE BRAINIAC'S "DOGS" EVEN CLOSER.
THERE! W. IW
SKROOM!
SKROOM!
THANK RAO! THE BLASTS SHATTERED THE DOOR!
FORTUNATELY, WHEN THE COMPUTER ALTERED ITS BEAMS, IT NEVER CHANGED THEM BACK.
AND THERE'S BRAINIAC'S SHUTTLESHIP--STILL IN ITS DOCKING BAY.
JUST WHAT THIS SUPERMAN NEEDS TO STAY ALIVE.


AND, A MOMENT LATER...
...SO, WITH A LITTLE LUCK ON MY SIDE--
--I CAN AVOID BRAINIAC LONG ENOUGH FOR MY POWERS TO RETURN.
CONTROLS ARE MECHANICAL --NOT AT ALL DIFFICULT TO HANDLE...
HE HAS ESCAPED? I CANNOT ALLOW THAT TO BE.
HIS VERY EXISTENCE IS ANATHEMA. IF HE IS ALLOWED TO LIVE, MY DOOM IS CERTAIN.
I WILL PURSUE HIM TO THE COLDEST REACHES OF THE FARTHEST STAR...
...AND WHEN WE MEET, MY ENEMY AND I, THERE WILL BE A MOST SANGUINARY BATTLE.
I AM SUPPOSED TO BE EMOTIONLESS, YET WHY DO I FEEL FEAR? WHY SHOULD I SENSE DREAD IN SUPERMAN'S VERY NAME?
I MUST ENTER THIS INTO MY PROGRAMMING, AND ANALYZE MY ILLOGICAL RESPONSE.
BUT UNTIL THEN, I FIND THIS FEELING MOST-- UNSETTLING.

MEANWHILE...
BRAINIAC'S ON MY TAIL. LET'S HOPE DIVING INTO THIS METEOR SHOWER IS THE RIGHT WAY TO EVADE HIM.
TROUBLE IS, IT'S AS CHANCY AS FACING HIM OUTRIGHT.
ONE WRONG TURN AND I CRASH--AND WITHOUT MY INVULNERABILITY...
FORTUNATELY, RED-SUN RADIATION DOESN'T DIMINISH MY SUPER-SENSES. RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE ALL THAT'S SEPARATING ME FROM INSTANT OBLIVION.
SHIELDS ACTIVATED. WHILE SUPERMAN MUST AVOID THOSE METEORS...
...I CAN SAVE PRECIOUS TIME BY SIMPLY FLYING THROUGH THEM.
REM: CALCULATE TRAJECTORY NEEDED TO DIVERT SUPERMAN'S COURSE .00743 DEGREES. END.

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP TRACK OF ALL THE CALCULATIONS.
BRAINIAC'S BEARING DOWN ON ME, MOVING TOO SWIFTLY.
THIS IS LIKE DRIVING A CAR FOR THE FIRST TIME--I KNOW WHAT TO DO--
--BUT IT'S TOO DIFFICULT TO HANDLE IT ALL!
RADAR INDICATES BRAINIAC'S SHIP IS NARROWING IN--
--ONLY HOPE, SWING TO THE...
...LEFT?!?
RAO!!
IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM...
IT IS OVER.
I FEEL... RELIEF
THOUGH WHY I SHOULD EXPERIENCE ANY EMOTION IS --


NO!
HE SEES THE RED AND BLUE FIGURE HURTLING OUT OF THE VOID, AND FOR A MOMENT, THIS LIVING COMPUTER FEELS THE "LIFEBLOOD" DRAIN FROM HIM AND BE REPLACED WITH A CHILLING NUMBNESS...
IT TAKES ANOTHER MOMENT TO ADJUST, TO REGAIN FULL SENSORY CONTROL. THEN...
SUPERMAN LIVES. RED SOLAR RADIATION DISSIPATED, RETURNING HIS POWERS.
I... FEEL A PRISONER OF MY DESTINY--THE IMAGES I SAW, THE GRASPING HAND OF THE MASTER PROGRAMMER--
--THE THREATENING GAZE OF HIS ANGEL OF DEATH...
...THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WAY TO ALTER THAT FUTURE.
STILL, I HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE THAN TO TRY. I AM BRAINIAC...
I AM THE MOST ADVANCED ORGANISM OF MY KIND.
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I CANNOT ALLOW MYSELF TO BE DISMANTLED.
BRAINIAC'S SHIP IS ALIVE--
--AT LEAST AS ALIVE AS BRAINIAC HIMBELF.
BUT I THINK MY COMPUTERIZED SPARRING PARTNER HAS FINALLY MADE A BAD MISTAKE.
WITHOUT MY POWERS, I MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN HELPLESS--
--BUT NOW I'VE GOT THEM...
...AND I CERTAINLY KNOW HOW TO USE THEM!
WHEN I'M DONE, ALL THIS SHIP WILL BE GOOD FOR IS SO MUCH SCRAP METAL!
BRAINIAC DOESN'T GIVE UP, DOES HE? WELL, IF HE WANTS ANOTHER TENTACLE RIPPED APART... EH?
SO THAT'S WHAT HE'S UP TO! HE'S LAUNCHED ANOTHER RED-SUN TORPEDO!
OKAY...

...ALL I HAVE TO DO IS AVOID IT!
CAN'T RISK LETTING IT STRIKE ME IN SPACE...
NO GOOD. IT'S FOLLOWING ME LIKE SOME BLASTED BLOODHOUND.
RAO! I CAN FEEL ITS HEAT... EVEN SOME OF THE RADIATION... SLOWING ME DOWN...
NOW IT'S GETTING COLD.
NO TIME TO FIGURE OUT HOW IT WORKS -- I'VE GOT TO SURVIVE.
AND I'VE GOT TO DO THAT--FAST!
IT'S CATCHING UP...
C'MON... I NEED EVERY IOTA OF SPEED I CAN MUSTER.
GETTING HARD TO BREATHE... IT MEANS I'M LOSING MY POWERS...
...ONLY ONE LAST HOPE. I'VE LED IT TO THIS SUN...
...IF I CAN MAKE IT... PLUNGE INSIDE -- AND PRAY THE HEAT BURNS IT AWAY...
...AND THE FASTER I GO, THE FASTER IT MOVES!

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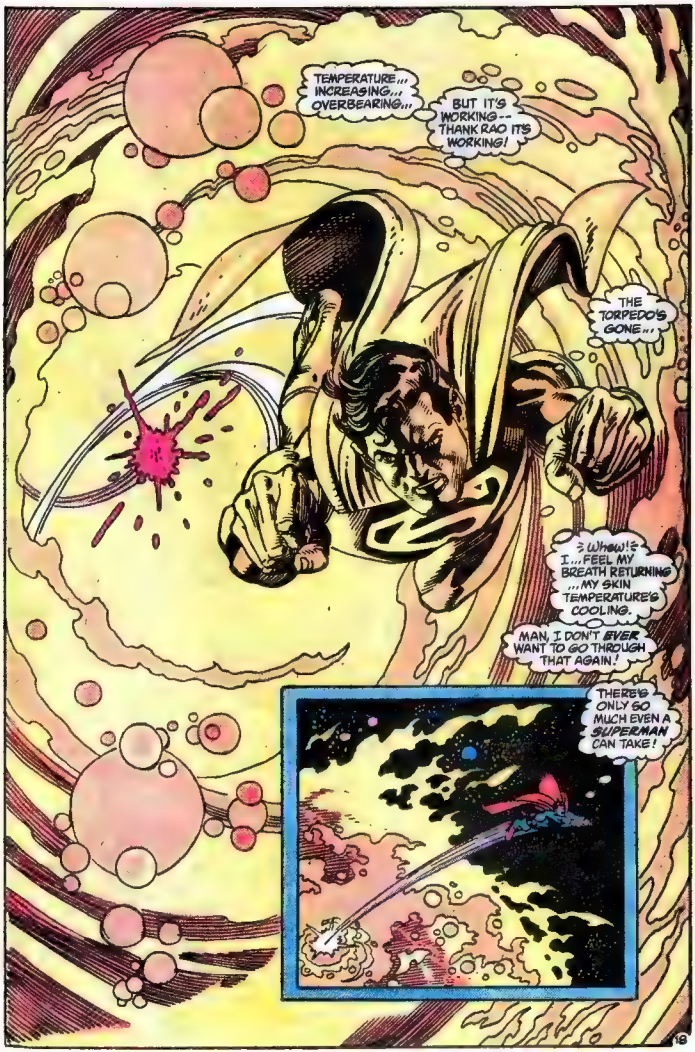
TEMPERATURE... INCREASING... OVERBEARING...
BUT IT'S WORKING -- THANK RAO IT'S WORKING!
THE TORPEDO'S GONE...
:Whew!: I...FEEL MY BREATH RETURNING ...MY SKIN TEMPERATURE'S COOLING.
MAN, I DON'T *EVER* WANT TO GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN!
THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH EVEN A *SUPERMAN* CAN TAKE!

WELL, SO MUCH FOR THAT. I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO BRAINIAC.
OR MAYBE I SHOULD SAY--THE 'NEW' BRAINIAC. ONE THING'S FOR CERTAIN--
--THE BRAINIAC I FOUGHT IS DEFINITELY NOT MY OLD FOE--EH?
HIS SHIP--GONE?! NOT EVEN MY TELESCOPIC VISION CAN FIND HIM.
THAT MEANS HE PROBABLY HAS WARP CAPABILITIES. HE COULD BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GALAXY BY NOW!
WELL, I CAN'T SAY I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT. FRANKLY, I WASN'T LOOKING FORWARD TO ANOTHER FIGHT.
I'M EXHAUSTED... AND I'VE GOT A LOT TO THINK ABOUT.
BESIDES, THIS NEW BRAINIAC FRIGHTENS ME...HE'S UNLIKE ANY ENEMY I'VE EVER MET BEFORE.
HE HAS NO MORALITY, NO COMPASSION--HE SIMPLY WANTS TO CONTROL.
AND I DON'T KNOW IF EVEN A SUPERMAN CAN STOP HIM!

EARTH! HOW BEAUTIFUL IT LOOKS FROM UP HERE. I REALLY BEGIN TO MISS IT WHEN I'M GONE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME.
BUT I'M BACK--AND MY WORRIES CAN CHANGE FROM INTERSTELLAR--
TO STRICTLY PERSONAL.
SPEAKING OF WHICH, I WONDER IF LANA IS AROUND...
MR. KENT. I'VE BEEN WANTING TO SPEAK TO YOU.
OH, HI, JUSTIN. HOW'S THE JOB GOING?
WELL, THERE'S NOT AS MUCH RESPONSIBILITY AS I'D LIKE, BUT NO MAJOR PROBLEMS SO FAR.
CLARK? PERRY NEEDS YOU.
HANG IN THERE, JUSTIN. EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT.
I'M NOT HOLDING MY BREATH, MR. KENT.
WHAT'S UP, JIM?
IT'S PERRY... CLARK, I TELL YOU SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH HIM...
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EVENING STREAKS THE GRAND CANYON IN RIBBONS OF GOLD AND SCARLET. HERE, AWAY FROM ANY CITY, AWAY FROM CIVILIZATION, MAN AND NATURE BECOME ONE...
...EXCEPTING, OF COURSE, WHEN MAN HAS CORRUPTED WHAT GOD HAS WROUGHT...
WHAT DO YOU THINK, RIP?
I WISH I KNEW...EVERYTHING'S GOING SO POORLY.
I HATE IT. HERE I AM--RIP HUNTER--THE TIME MASTER, THEY CALLED ME--
--AND RIGHT NOW TIME IS MY WORST ENEMY!
RIP, THE HELICOPTER'S LANDING! THEY'RE COMING!
CAVE CARSON, IS THAT YOU? I HARDLY RECOGNIZE YOU.
YEAH, HUNTER. IT'S ME... AND THIS IS DANE DORRANCE OF THE SEA DEVILS.
WHAT ABOUT RICK FLAGG, DOLPHIN--AND ALL THE OTHERS?
DON'T LET YOUR PANTS ITCH, HUNTER. THEY'LL BE HERE SOON ENOUGH.
I HOPE SO, CARSON. TO THE WORLD AT LARGE WE'RE ALL THE FORGOTTEN HEROES--
--BUT NOW ONLY WE CAN SAVE THE WORLD!!
RIP HUNTER'S WORDS MAY BE TRUE ENOUGH, BUT NOT FOR THE REASONS HE EXPECTS...
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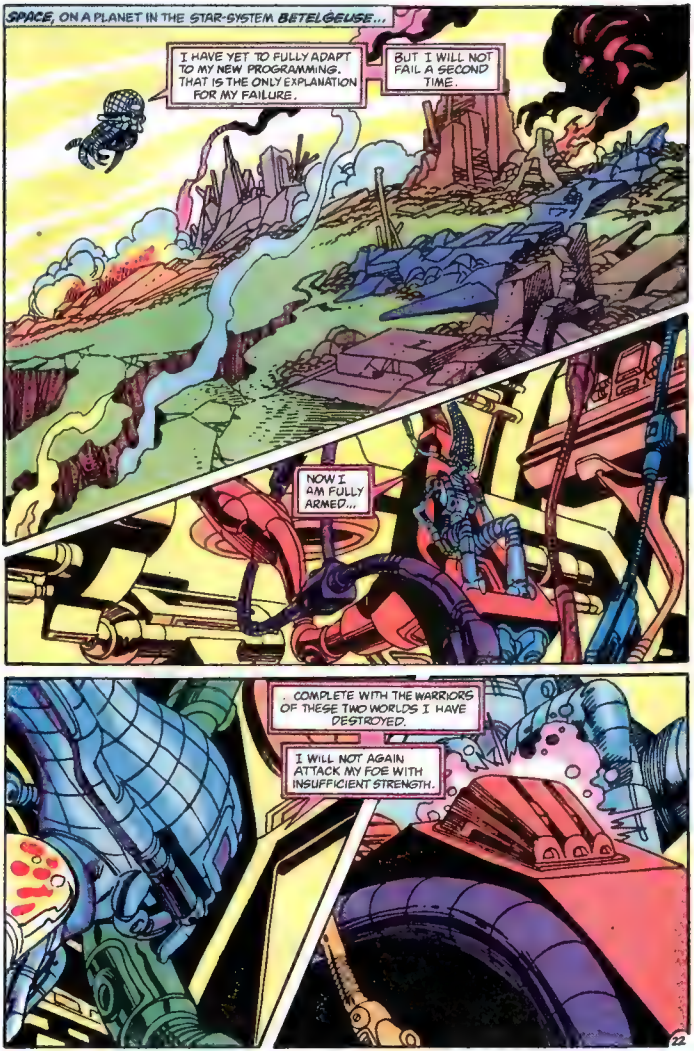
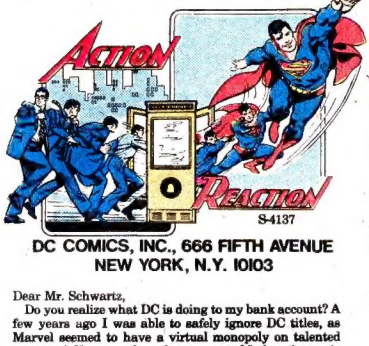

SPACE, ON A PLANET IN THE STAR-SYSTEM BETELGEUSE...
I HAVE YET TO FULLY ADAPT TO MY NEW PROGRAMMING. THAT IS THE ONLY EXPLANATION FOR MY FAILURE.
BUT I WILL NOT FAIL A SECOND TIME.
NOW I AM FULLY ARMED...
. COMPLETE WITH THE WARRIORS OF THESE TWO WORLDS I HAVE DESTROYED.
I WILL NOT AGAIN ATTACK MY FOE WITH INSUFFICIENT STRENGTH.

THIS TIME, WHEN WE MEET, SUPERMAN WILL DIE!
THE BATTLE COMES TO EARTH, AND TO SAVE OUR PLANET, SUPERMAN ENLISTS THE POWERS OF THE--
JUSTICE LEAGUE of AMERICA AND THE NEW TEEN TITANS
BE HERE NEXT ISSUE--THE NEW ERA IN SUPERMAN HAS ONLY BEGUN! ON SALE MAY 26th. IT'S A DATE!
23



DC COMICS, INC., 666 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK, N.Y. 10103

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

Do you realize what DC is doing to my bank account? A few years ago I was able to safely ignore DC titles, as Marvel seemed to have a virtual monopoly on talented personnel. However, those days are past. My favorite comic now is *THE NEW TEEN TITANS* and I'm also buying a number of other DC books, largely due to the recent influx of ex-Marvel talent. And now I hear that Frank Miller and Doug Moench are coming over as well!

In my book, DC now has the majority of "fan favorites" working for them. George Perez, Marv Wolfman, Gil Kane, Gene Colan, Gerry Conway, Roy Thomas, Keith Giffen, Frank Miller and Doug Moench, added to Don Newton, Carmine Infantino, Keith Pollard, and Dick Giordano make it obvious why DC has made a resurgence in the sales department.

Specifically, I have been most pleased by Marv Wolfman and Gil Kane and their handling of *Superman* in *ACTION COMICS*. *Superman* is the one character who has deserved to be (and seldom has been) well done. Besides an occasional rendering by Neal Adams or Jim Starlin, *Superman* has been both written and drawn horribly. Congratulations on putting an end to that kind of treatment in *ACTION*.

Until the past couple of years, I didn't have much appreciation for Gil Kane's work. When I purchased an occasional *GREEN LANTERN* in the '60's, I'd think that the bodies all looked too spastic to be real. Then, a couple of years ago, an artist friend pointed out how anatomically perfect Kane's drawings actually were. In fact, he claims that Kane is the most anatomically correct artist in comics! True or not, I began to develop a new appreciation for Gil's art. Now that he's come over to *ACTION*, I'm more than pleased.

You can count on me to be a regular reader of *ACTION* and you can bet your sales will go up as I spread the word on how good the magazine has become!

AL HARRIS
3000 College Parkway #26
Bellingham, WA 98225

We'll watch our sales figures in Washington, Al. Meantime, Gil Kane's art has certainly sparked a lot of mail—which we'll dig into after some specific comments on issues 540 and 541.—BR

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

Let's hear it for Marv. He has the tendency to write some of the most fabulous stories I could ever read!

I am referring to *ACTION* #540's "World Enough and Time!"

I personally think that those doctors at the hospital were a bunch of dodos. I'm sure they could have at least removed Clark's glasses before starting the autopsy. Then, the moment Clark comes back to life, they say "Mr. Kent, we have to run tests!" Geez!

Back at Lois's place, I just loved when Jimmy said the doctors wanted Clark in for tests for his own good. But Clark's reply was, "They always say that, don't they?" True, true. It also seemed to me that Lois is getting a pretty observant eye on Clark and *Superman* these days.

So now we come to the Satanis-versus-Syrene fight. At first I thought, "How boring!" These fights always seem to be the same. Always threatening to kill one another through the entire story. Was I wrong!

I hate to criticize the art, but Dr. Hunter looks like a freckle-less Jimmy Olsen as he appeared in that *Superman 2021* story. Gil Kane did the art on both!

But still, all was great!

LISA FRANK
425 Valley View Road
Englewood, NJ 07631

.....Correct us if we're wrong, but wouldn't they have removed Clark's glasses before starting an autopsy?

RAY SZYMANSKI & PAUL DiBERNARDO
No Address Given

Maybe they suspected he would "wake-up" and would want to see what they were doing!—BR

*****

Dear Marv and Company,

I just finished reading *ACTION* #540. If this is any indication of what *Superman*'s life is going to be like in the future, then he is truly headed for a new era of greatness. *Superman* has suffered in the past few years from his own omnipotence. No one reading his adventures really believed he could be hurt or killed, so his validity as a "real" character suffered tremendously. What Marv is doing, apparently, is continuing Len Wein's treatment of attacking *Superman* on a psychological level. These psychological traumas are much more exciting than watching *Superman* change the course of mighty rivers or bend steel in his bare hands. *Superman* now gets seriously hurt, doubts his effectiveness and loses blood. This is great! He's become much easier to relate to.

The best part of Marv's treatment is the relationship between the supporting cast members and Clark Kent. He's real now, not just Kal-El in a boring blue suit. I'm hoping Marv expounds on the Clark/Lana relationship by making it more serious and romantic. They've been together a lot of years, taking each other for granted. For all her snooping and put-downs, Lana has always been a superior character to Lois. Lana deserves a much larger portion of the *Superman* legend than she's been given.

Finally, Jimmy Olsen needs to suffer a little emotional distress to round out his character. His maturation from Jimmy to James is long overdue and the change could be brought about by forcing him to face the grim realities of society and life in general.

Here's hoping Marv will instill the same energy into *Superman* that he puts into the *Teen Titans*. That will make *Superman* the strength of the DC line once more.

MELVIN JONES
2300 Hamilton Avenue
Columbus, OH 43211

*****

Dear Marv,

You almost had me convinced that Clark Kent was dead. In fact, it reminded me of one of my favorite lines from *M*A*S*H*. I can almost picture it. Two of the Daily Planet staffers see Clark walking down the hall one day. One turns to the other and says, "I thought you said he was dead." The other replies, "He got better!"

MIKE SOPP
438 W. 32nd
Erie, PA 16508

*****

Dear Julie,

ACTION #'s 539-541 contained one of the best *Superman* stories I've read in years. The pages seemed charged with the high-powered graphics of Gil Kane. And although a great deal of the story was one fight scene after another, Marv's little bits of characterization kept the story interesting.

However, although I enjoyed the story, I do have some constructive criticism I'd like to share with you. I realize Gil Kane is respected as being one of the great comic artists of our time. He's also one of the few veteran artists whose style has evolved instead of mutated. However, he has to work on facial expressions. I'll be darned if Lana didn't have the exact same open-mouthed expression on her face in every panel of page 6 in #541.

Putting aside that quibble, Gil draws the best *Superman* I've ever seen. It's easy to see if Gil is excited about pencilling a comic: Either his art is exciting and dynamic or it's dull and lifeless. Needless to say, Gil seems to be enjoying himself on *ACTION*. I sincerely hope he stays here as penciller for a good long time.

MASON KING
5757 Broadway
Indianapolis, IN 46220

All right, I know I said we'd wait till the end for the Gil Kane art debate, but there seems no way to avoid it since virtually every letter-writer has something to say. So, on with the debate!—BR

*****

Dear Julie and Bob,

Gil Kane could be the best artist *ACTION* has had since Neal Adams. His art is more savage than most others who have drawn the Man of Steel. A decidedly different version from Curt Swan's mellow Son of Krypton. I'm not trying to dethrone the best-liked *Superman* artist, but I'm glad he's no longer monopolizing the Man of Steel's books. What appeals to me most about Gil's art is the sense of urgency that is given off, not just in the characters' faces, but in their layout and poses. Lana Lang never looked so good!

RICHARD A. WAGENER
21408 S. Quinn Avenue
Matteson, IL 60443

.....I hate to sound negative, but why is Gil Kane drawing *Superman*? You may not know it, but Curt Swan has a loyal following here in Mexico. To replace him is almost sacrilegious! Kane's *SUPERMAN SPECIAL* was a disaster in every aspect. To look forward to his work in *ACTION* is no future.

SERGIO MANNO
Acapulco, Mexico

.....Gil Kane's artwork can never be called dull. His work on the *SUPERMAN SPECIAL* was outstanding and his work in the recent *ACTIONS* has been almost as good. Some people may scream because it's different and complain that he doesn't make *Superman* look the same, but some evolution is needed. It's an added grandeur and excitement and a more interesting behind-the-scenes look for Clark.

GREG FRANKLIN
24 Elder Parade
Essendon, Victoria, Australia 3040

.....Gil Kane is just about the only artist left from the early '70's whose work hasn't stagnated. Gil has become the quintessential comic book artist, playing on the medium with a virtuoso's hand, defining absolute power and motion, always telling a story with drama and verve. He has stolen the crown from King Kirby and all the others.

MICHAEL MACRONE
Box 3192
Providence, RI 02906

.....I miss Curt Swan, but Gil Kane's work is really offbeat and not bad at all.

L. STEPHEN BORER
2135 Iglehart Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55104

.....Please allow me to be brief. No one—I mean NO ONE—draws *Superman* better than Gil Kane. Never has the Man of Steel been so well rendered. My compliments and admiration to the master.

PEDRO ACOSTA
PO Box 264
New Haven, CT 06502

.....I don't want to bore you with a long letter so I'll try to keep this short and to the point.

I'm writing about the art in *ACTION COMICS*. Gil Kane is an excellent penciller. It's his inking that isn't all that great.

Please bring in Dennis Jensen as the permanent inker. He's fantastic! After seeing what he did to Alex Saviuk's pencils in *DC COMICS PRESENTS* #38, imagine how utterly perfect Gil Kane's work would look.

You wouldn't be taking the slighest chance. I'm sure the readers' reactions would be 100% positive.

WILLIAM HUFFMAN
204 Collins St.
Albany, GA 31705

.....The lone gripe I have about *ACTION* is that I don't feel Gil Kane's style suits this magazine. I'm sure a lot of fans would be pleased if Gil swapped assignments with Keith Pollard.

ALEXANDER LUCHENITSER
2774 Hampshire Road #6
Cleveland Heights, OH 44106

.....I will comment on the only aspect of Gil Kane's art that has bothered me. Gil, please correct Clark's glasses. The lenses are smaller and more rectangular than you drew them. Also, the rims are thicker.

I'm not complaining. I just want DC comics to be the best they possibly can.

JEF PECKHAM
503 Marlatt Hall
Kansas State Univ.
Manhattan, KS 66506

.....It's great to see Gil Kane back with you. I really love his art on *Superman*.

BJORN SIGURDSSON
Hjaltabakka 6
109 Reykjavik, Iceland

Considering we've heard from Iceland, Australia, and Mexico, plus all across the United States, this certainly has turned into a world-wide debate! And you can be sure there'll be more of it in upcoming issues. Meantime, one more letter, relating to sculpture—not drawing!—BR

*****

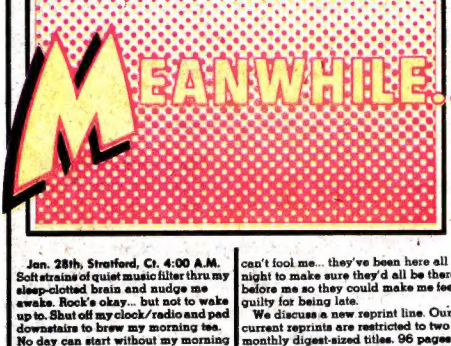
Dear Editor,

In *ACTION* #541 you show *Superman* crashing into the nose of the Sphinx. But according to history, the nose was shot off by soldiers. So how do you explain what happened if *Superman* went back to the present right after he defeated Lord Satanis?

JOHN CHUNG
2E Walnut Street
Alexandria, VA 22301

Obviously, Superman went back and fixed it sometime... so that those soldiers could shoot it off again centuries later!

And on that note we invite you to shoot off your letters to us and join us again next issue!—Bob Rozakis



Jan. 28th, Stratford, Ct. 4:00 A.M. Soft strains of quiet music filter thru my sleep-clotted brain and nudge me awake. Rock's okay... but not to wake up to. Shut off my clock/radio and pad downstairs to brew my morning tea. No day can start without my morning tea.

4:20 A.M. Armed with my steaming mug (Sweet 'n' Low and a little cream, please), I sit down at my drawing table, turn on my T.V. to "Nightline" and start inking page 6 of a special **Teen Titans** book concerned with drugs. It's a 28 page book by the regular **Titans'** team of Wolfman and Perez but this one's being done for the government. The anti-drug message doesn't interfere with it being a **good** story and so we may also release it to the general public as a special.

6:15 A.M. Finished inking the figures on page 6. Bill Collins who's helping me by inking backgrounds on this book will finish it up. Too tight a deadline for a part-timer like me to do alone.

7:05 A.M. Showered, shampooed, shaved and as shiny as I can be, I jump in my '79 Monte Carlo for the short drive to the railroad station to catch the 7:28 to New York. First I gotta stop at Dunkin' Donuts for my morning coffee. No day can start without my morning coffee.

7:28 A.M. Made it! After finishing my morning coffee and looking at all the pretty girls on the train, I dig into the bulging portfolio I carry all the time for some paper and start to write this column! (Of course I can't finish writing this till later... The day hasn't finished yet.)

9:15 A.M. (New York City) Late again! We arrive at Grand Central station some fifteen minutes late and I have to hustle to the office to make a 9:30 meeting in Paul Levitz's office.

9:29 (At my office) Just have time to fix my mid-morning cup of coffee before running down the hall to Paul's office. No meeting can start without my mid-morning cup of coffee.

9:32 (Paul's office) Roger Slifer, Editor, Bruce Bristow, Marketing Director and Paul, V.P. Operations all look up as I burst into the office. They stare at me a bit reproachfully. They can't fool me... they've been here all night to make sure they'd all be there before me so they could make me feel guilty for being late.

We discuss a new reprint line. Our current reprints are restricted to two monthly digest-sized titles. 96 pages each and some pretty good stuff but the small size makes the good stories less impressive and it's clear that the off-size isn't terribly popular with retailers. The first thing we decide is that even if we produce a few digest reprints a year, most of our future reprints will be conventionally sized with at least some of it to have good production values (offset printing on Baxter stock). We decide that details will be firmed up at a later meeting. I mention that our new reprint rates will make our artists & writers very happy. We've increased them over 400%! Very happy indeed!

10:30 (Back in my office) My last (Honest!) cup of coffee for the day sits in front of me as I write all this down (From 9:15 A.M.) before I forget. Before I'm done, the following takes place (though not necessarily in this order).

- Julie Schwartz pops in with the news that Superman and Supergirl will be a bit late this month. No sweat.
- Bob LeRose (Production) has a problem on a cover. We solve it.
- Karen Berger insists we're going to ship an entire week of comics late if I don't start hounding some of our people. She **has** to tell me that. She's our Editorial Coordinator.
- Pat Bastienne worries that the Freelancer checks won't be down from Payroll till late in the afternoon and the artists and writers who come in to pick them up will have to wait for them.
- Roy Thomas calls from L.A. Gee, he's up early. Only 8:30 or so his time. Wants to know if the title for his new project has cleared copyright search. It hasn't. "How can we promote it if it doesn't have a title?" Gee, I don't know, Roy!
- Len Wein reminds me that we've got an afternoon meeting. What time, Len? About 3:00 P.M. Okay.

12:05 P.M. Lunch time! Generally, lunch time is also business time. When I can, I go to lunch with one (or more) of our writers or artists and discuss... well, comics. Not so today. I take off with a few people from the office and manage to stare at the wall a lot while I'm eating to recharge my batteries.

1:15 (Back at the office) Note on my desk advises me that my "Meanwhile..." column is desperately late. "Warning: If it's not to the typesetter by Monday... We print a **blank** page!" I don't get no respect.

1:35 (my office) Don McGregor brings in the re-write for "Nathaniel Dusk" #1. He originally wrote it as a complete script but Gene Colan felt constricted and made some changes to open it up a bit. This required that Don do a partial re-write to bridge the gaps left by Gene's changes. The final result of the two working off each other is near perfect.

2:07 (Still my office) Before I can digest the Dusk re-write, Ernie Colon and Roger Slifer plop themselves down across my desk and proceed to outline a year's worth of material scheduled for "**New Talent Showcase**" They're the editors of that worthwhile project that provides a showcase for new talent. (That's why we picked **that** title, gang!). Their line-up looks great and after making some suggestions for getting the operation to run more smoothly, we agree to meet again in a week or two and set a firm schedule for the books premiere appearance.

2:48 (My office still) Just time for a few phone calls before my 3:00 'clock meeting. Nuts 'N Bolts stuff; like, "When's **Omega Men** #4 gonna come in, Mike?" And "Don't laugh, Frank! I really need the art for the **Ronin** poster by the 17th" and "what do you mean you haven't been paid for the **Green Lantern** art... I put your bill thru two weeks ago!"

3:00 Doug Moench, George Perez, Len Wein and Marv Wolfman troop into, and take over my office. "We're gonna talk about Robin I an' Robin II", I'm informed. Well, first of all we'll never call them by those names. And secondly I can't tell you any more yet. But the meeting lasted until 5:19 P.M. and that's the time I have to leave the office to make the...

5:42 Train back to Stratford I read "Sword Of The Atom" part III on the train, discuss some of the day's events with staffer Pat Bastienne who often shares my commute. I doze off.

7:17 (Stratford) And just 9 minutes late.

7:30 (Home again) In time for dinner, a bit of T.V. and falling asleep **wherever** I am by 10 P.M. (Unless I'm doing something I like!)

Well, some of you have asked "just **what** does an Executive Editor (or Managing Editor; or Editor-in-Chief) do? " And I just thought I'd...

Thank you and Good afternoon...

Dick—